

many friendly countries. U.S. food aid has also helped ease the transition to market-oriented economies in many former communist countries. The efforts of other private voluntary organizations to build homes, teach skills, care for the sick and wounded, and shelter refugees have eliminated many of the underlying sources of political violence and military conflict.

The role of U.S. private voluntary organizations overseas has been extraordinary: no private-public partnership has been more effective in promoting key U.S. foreign policy goals. Americans owe these groups considerable gratitude for their vital contribution to our humanitarian objectives, our national security, and our international prestige.

But the dedicated and talented people who work for U.S. private voluntary organizations would not want note to be taken of their work without some attention also being paid to the human deprivation that still exists in the developing world. We need consider only the stunning data on world hunger to gain a sense of the scope of the world's unmet humanitarian needs. More than 13 million children die from hunger-related causes every year—an average of 35,000 each day, or 1,500 an hour. More than 180 million children are seriously malnourished today; many of those who survive will never reach their full physical and intellectual potential. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts that world food aid needs will double just in the next decade. Yet the food aid budgets of many countries are declining, food prices are rising, and farm surpluses are low.

U.S. food aid spending has been declining since 1993. The major farm bill enacted into law earlier this year included several measures that will make U.S. food aid programs more effective, but there is a limit to what we can do with declining resources.

Most Americans support U.S. Government food aid and other assistance to the world's poorest people. They want to help people in need, and they recognize that alleviating suffering make the world more secure and peaceful. As they learn more about the essential role played by private voluntary organizations in implementing the humanitarian programs of U.S. foreign policy, I am confident Americans will want to expand and improve those programs.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. CARDISS COLLINS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 30, 1996

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that we can bring this veterans' preference bill to the floor today.

I would like to congratulate Chairman JOHN MICA and ranking Member JIM MORAN of the Subcommittee on Civil Service on their work to craft this bill.

During a hearing held by the subcommittee in April, representatives of the veterans service organizations articulated concerns that the inevitable work force reductions, agency restructurings, and experimentation with more flexible personnel rules have great potential to

undermine veterans' preference. The provisions of H.R. 3586, which provide veterans increased protections during reductions-in-force, and which strengthen the administrative redress system should violations of veterans' preference occur, will ensure that those fears are not realized.

Veterans' preference in Federal civil service is a priority which has deserved and received broad bipartisan support in Congress for more than 130 years.

Since the Civil War, there have been statutory preferences in Federal civil service hiring for veterans of armed conflict, including special provisions for veterans disabled in combat and some eligible family members of disabled and deceased veterans.

A number of developments are increasingly affecting the proportion of veterans in the Federal work force and in the private sector. Those who remain of the 15 million veterans of World War II are into or approaching retirement. The youngest Vietnam veterans are already into their 40's and midway through their careers. Subsequent armed conflicts involving Americans in uniform have been limited in scope. It should be expected that the percentage of veterans in Federal employment will decrease as the percentage of veterans in the general work force decreases.

I am heartened by the reports from the General Accounting Office, the Office of Personnel Management, and from the Merit Systems Protection Board that the percentage of veterans currently in Federal employment and being hired by Federal agencies is significantly higher than in the general work force.

The existing preference rules for hiring and retention are generally working well. It is our hope that this legislation will guarantee that veterans' preference continues to be a central element of our civil service system.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3103, HEALTH INSURANCE PORT- ABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. GARY A. FRANKS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, August 1, 1996

Mr. FRANKS of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for the conference report to H.R. 3103, the Health Coverage Availability and Affordability Act. Passage of this conference report will ensure that Americans have access to health care coverage.

The conference report before us will bring about much needed reform to the insurance industry. It address such important issues as portability and pre-existing conditions. Individuals will no longer have to remain in a job they do not like in order to maintain insurance coverage. The portability provisions will ensure that individuals will not lose their coverage if they get sick.

The conference report also contains a 4-year demonstration project for tax deductible medical savings accounts for small business, the self employed, and the uninsured. The medical savings accounts will put the individual in charge of his or her health coverage.

Another important provisions of the conference report is the self-employment deduc-

tion for health insurance expenses. Under this provision the self-employed will be able to deduct a certain percentage of their health insurance expenses from their taxes. The deductible will increase from 30 percent to 80 percent in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to enact meaningful reform of our insurance industry. This conference report does that. It is the result of many weeks of bipartisan negotiations. The provisions contained in this report will enable the American people to feel confident about their insurance coverage, while at the same time keeping it affordable. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this conference report.

MEDICARE WAIVER FOR THE WELLNESS PLAN OF MICHIGAN

HON. JOHN DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 2, 1996

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, today, I am joining with a number of my colleagues in introducing legislation to help the Medicare population in Michigan. This bill will make it possible for a longstanding, quality federally qualified health maintenance organization [HMO] that primarily has served the Medicaid population, to become available to Medicare beneficiaries. The Wellness Plan is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) federally qualified HMO serving several counties in Michigan, including the Detroit MSA. The Wellness Plan currently has 150,000 enrollees, 141,000 of whom are Medicaid, 12,000 commercial and 2,000 Medicare.

The Wellness Plan is a nationally recognized leader in providing quality health services to this population. Since 1993, The Wellness Plan has had a Health Care Prepayment Plan [HCPP] contract with Medicare. Technical changes enacted by Congress and effective January 1, 1996, unintentionally prevent the Wellness Plan from enrolling additional Medicare beneficiaries under the HCPP contract.

The Wellness Plan is positioned to become a full Medicare risk contractor but currently is precluded from doing so due to the 50-50 Medicare enrollment composition rule. Given that the Wellness Plan has an established managed care record with respect to both the Medicaid and Medicare populations, and that the Health Care Financing Administration supports The Wellness Plan receiving a plan-specific 50-50 waiver at this time, this bill should be moved through the Congress as soon as practically possible.

INTEGRATING THE \$500-PER-CHILD CREDIT WITH THE EITC TO IMPROVE BOTH

HON. THOMAS E. PETRI

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 2, 1996

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I introduced legislation to create one seamless system of tax breaks for families with children, combining the best aspects of the earned income tax credit, and the proposed \$500-per-